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AUTHCR Davis, Cynthia L.; Sparks, June R.
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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were sent to the Academic Deans of all two-year colleges in Georgia in order to obtain information on the status of institutional research in those institutions. Responses were received from all 17 of the public junior colleges and from all but three of the eight private junior colleges. Results of the study indicated: (1) 14% of the institutions had a director of research, but only one individual served in this capacity on a full-time basis; (2) 10 institutions assigned the research function to a staff member as an additional responsibility; (3) 41% of the institutions reported no organized approach to research; (4) contrary to national trends, in Georgia, the commitment to research decreased as the size of the institution increased; (5) 44 institutional research studies were conducted in the year prior to the survey, which fell primarily under the categories of follow-up studies and data collection/interpretation studies and only secondarily in the areas of institutional planning and evaluation; and (6) only 35% of the Academic Deans felt the research needs of their institutions were met by the current allocation of personnel and staff to the research function. The study suggested there was a gap between the research needed and the actual institutional research being conducted which might best be met through the training and encouragement of existing staff as non-professional researchers. The questionnaire is attached. (JDS)

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

in

GEORGIA JUNIOR COLLEGES

Cynthia L. Davis
June R. Sparks

Dalton Junior College
Dalton, Georgia

Presented
at
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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the status of institutional research in Georgia junior colleges, a questionnaire was sent to the Academic Deans of all junior colleges in the state. The results indicate that Georgia junior colleges have limited staff allocations for institutional research. The majority of the studies conducted fall in the categories of follow-up studies and data collection and interpretation studies. Additional emphasis in the areas of institutional planning and evaluation is desired as well as increased research staff allocations. The use of the non-professional researcher to meet these needs is suggested.

National surveys conducted in the past 5 years indicate that institutional research is becoming more significant as a tool in planning and evaluating community college programs. Institutional researchers are moving from positions as routine data collectors to positions as significant contributors on the management team, providing valuable assistance to administrators in defining institutional needs and assessing program effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to analyze the status of institutional research in the junior colleges of Georgia in the context of this national trend.

Questionnaires (see Appendix 1) were sent to the Academic Dean's of the 17 public and 8 private institutions in the state. Responses were received from all of the public and 5 of the private schools. All five private colleges and three of the public institutions responding have enrollments of less than 1000 students, 9 have enrollments between 1000 and 2000, 4 between 2000 and 3,500, and one has an enrollment of more than 7000.

Three or 14% of the responding institutions have a director of research, but only one serves in this capacity full time. Ten other schools assign the research function to another staff member as an additional responsibility. Table one indicates the breakdown of staff assignments to research.

TABLE 1

Staff Allocations for Institutional Research

Position	Frequency	Average time in research
Director of Research	3	61%
Academic Dean	4	9%
Registrar	3	9%
Teaching Faculty	2	10%
Director of Development	1	20%

The remaining nine institutions or 41% of the schools responding report no organized approach to research. In contrast, a national survey (Alfred, Fremer, & Lightfield, 1977) conducted in 1976 showed 55% of the responding institutions had an office of research while only 10% had no organized research activity.

The relationship between research activity and institution size also differed markedly from national patterns, which indicated that commitment to research efforts increases with the size of the institution. Of the 13 responding institutions identifying a person with official responsibility for institutional research, 7 or 54% represent colleges with enrollments below 1000, 4 or 31% represent institutions with enrollments from 1000 to 2000, and 2 or 15% had enrollments from 2000-3500. In Georgia, it appears that commitment to research decreases with the size of the institution.

Forty-four institutional research projects conducted during the past academic year were reported from 15 institutions. The projects reported clearly indicate that Academic Deans, see research as a means of obtaining vital information for planning and decision making. This perception of the role of institutional research parallels the national pattern. The function of the research projects conducted are catagorized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

The Function of Reported Institutional Research Projects

Function	Number	Percent
Institutional Planning	5	11%
Follow-up Studies	17	39%
Program Evaluation	9	20%
Data Collection/Interpretation	13	30%

When asked whether the research needs of their institutions were being adequately met by the current allocation of personnel and staff time, only 8 or 35% of the Academic Deans responded positively.

Twenty-five additional projects were suggested by 15 institutions. These desired research functions are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Additional Research Functions Needed by Junior Colleges

Function	Number	Percentage
Institutional Planning	6	24%
Follow-up Studies	6	24%
Evaluation	7	28%
Data Collection/Interpretation	6	24%

It appears that Academic Deans are asking for an increased emphasis on institutional planning and program evaluation and are calling for fewer follow-up studies and data collection projects. Apparently there is a gap between the actual institutional research efforts reported by the junior colleges and what they feel is needed.

Of the institutions which reported that their research needs are not being met, 9 or 90% said that they needed additional staff assigned to institutional research. Several also mentioned that better coordination of campus research activities was desired.

The addition of new staff members in institutional research on many of these campuses is unrealistic. Declining college enrollments of the past year have severely restricted the creation of new faculty and staff positions. In all probability, junior colleges will need to make increased use of existing personnel for research purposes. The utilization of the non-professional

researcher has become a reality to the extent that a major state university is offering a summer institute aimed at training college administrators and teaching faculty to conduct institutional research. Table 1 indicated that junior colleges are already utilizing non-professional researchers to a certain extent. Nine or 41% of the responding colleges assigned the research responsibility to an existing staff member as an additional responsibility.

Five of the junior colleges without an office of institutional research report that institutional research projects are conducted by staff and faculty members who are not officially assigned to the task. Table 4 indicates the position and frequency of these independent researchers.

TABLE 4

Institutional Researchers Other Than Those Officially Assigned to Research

Position	Frequency
Academic Dean	3
Dean of Students	1
Registrar	2
Director of Counseling	2
Chairman of Vocational/Technical	2
Chairman of Special Studies	2
Director of Continuing Education	1
Teaching Faculty	1

No institutions reported that they felt that these independent research efforts did not make a valuable contribution to the institution. Only one junior college or 5% of the respondants felt that they would not encourage faculty and staff to become involved in research. Since institutional commitment to the evaluative research efforts of faculty members is an essential ingredient in the continuation of such studies (Bromley, 1976), the climate for increased research appears favorable in Georgia.

Given the budgetary restraints in the state it would appear then that a feasible solution to the need for additional institutional research would be to encourage more faculty and staff members to become involved. Organizations such as this Special Interest Group for Community College Research can play a vital role in providing additional encouragement and support for venturing researchers. Through its annual conferences, seminars, and research network, this SIG could provide non-professional researchers with an opportunity to exchange research knowledge and to develop close professional associations.

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Appendix 1

Junior College Institutional Research
Questionnaire

JUNIOR COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of Institution_____

   Enrollment_____

2. a. Who on your campus is assigned to and primarily responsible for conducting institutional research?

      Name_____

      Title_____

   b. What percentage of this person's time is spent in research related activities?

      _____%

3. Please list the names and titles of any additional staff or faculty personnel who are also officially assigned to institutional research duties.

Name	Title	% of time in research
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

4. Please give a list of the general types of research studies which have been conducted on your campus during the 1976-1977 school year.

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. a. Are institutional research projects conducted by any staff or faculty members who are not officially assigned to the research staff?

      _____yes,_____no,_____don't know

   b. If yes, please give the position title of the person and a brief indication of the nature of the institutional research conducted.

      _____

      _____

      _____

6. Do you feel that these independent research effects make a valuable contribution to your institution? _____yes,_____no,_____don't know.

7. Would you encourage your faculty and staff to become involved in research?

_____yes,_____no,_____don't know.

8. a. Do you feel that the research needs of your institution are being adequately met by the current allocation of personnel and staff time?

_____yes,_____no,_____don't know.

b. If you answered "no" above, what additions do you feel are needed in terms of faculty or staff time?_____

_____

_____

c. What additional research projects would you like to see?

_____

_____

_____

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